

Minutes
King County Rural Forest Commission
May 8, 2002
Preston Community Center

Commissioners present: Gordon Bradley, Louis Kahn, Steve Ketz, Bill Kombol, Ken Konigsmark, Fred McCarty, Doug McClelland, Dave Warren

Commissioners absent: Jean Bouffard, Rudy Edwards, Matt Mattson, Andrew Schwarz

Exofficio members: Steve Boyce

Staff: Jerry Balcom, Kathy Creahan, Don Harig, Bill Loeber, Jenna Tilt, Benj Wadsworth, Bobbi Wallace

Guests: Dennis Dart, Steve Johnson, Lee Kahn, Don Stuart

Doug McClelland called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Chair Report

Motion: 1-502: To adopt the April 10, 2002 minutes as written. Moved, seconded and approved.

Staff report:

Benj gave an update on the workshop planned for June 19. He distributed a list of invites and asked for suggestions as to additional people that should be invited. Doug commented that there will be a need for help in preparation the day of the event and hopes that Commissioners will be able to help out.

Benj gave an update on the Conservation Futures applications. The forestry program applied only for the Mitchell Hill parcels. Applications are now with the Citizen Oversight Committee, and they will be touring sites in the next few weeks. Benj may solicit help, most likely from Ken, in giving a presentation to the COC. Also, the Executive's office has submitted an application for Section 33 in the Cedar River watershed near Black Diamond. It is a full section of recently harvested forestland owned by Plum Creek. There is a BPA powerline running through it. It is in the Rural Area and zoned R-5. It is adjacent to Sugarloaf to the east. From a forestry standpoint, it is an appropriate acquisition.

Cost of Community Services Study

Kathy Creahan introduced Don Stuart from American Farmlands Trust. Don is seeking the Commission's endorsement of a Cost of Community Services Study for King County. The study would look at both forestland and agricultural land.

Don distributed information about the proposed study. American Farmlands Trust recently partnered with the Washington Farm Forestry Association to conduct a study in King County. A Cost of Community Services Study is a snapshot in time showing the relationship between cost of community services for various land uses and the taxes generated by those land uses. A study was conducted in Skagit County that showed that for every dollar paid by farmland owners, they received back \$.51 in community services. For every dollar paid by residential properties, they received \$1.25.

Bill Kombol commented that the phenomenon of rural areas subsidizing urban areas has been occurring since the first cities were established, and he wonders what this study is really going to show that is new and different. Don responded that the study is a good tool for public outreach. All agreed.

Doug asked about including the Forest Production District in the study. It will be included. Ken asked if American Farmlands Trust would be interested in doing a similar study in Kittitas County. They would be. Doug asked if the Commission could help by contacting funding agencies to encourage their support. Discussion ensued about the cost of the study and the timeline. Don estimated that in Kittitas it would cost appx. \$15,000 for the study, \$5000 for a nice brochure, and an additional \$6000 for outreach. It takes about six months to do a study.

Motion 2-502: To write a letter of support for the Cost of Community Services Study by the American Farmland Trust. Moved, seconded and approved.

Benj will work with Don to draft an appropriate letter and will look into other organizations that might be interested in writing a letter of support. Ken suggested that Mts-to-Sound would probably be willing to write a letter of support.

King County Forestry Program work plan

Kathy summarized the components of the forestry program work plan. They are:

- Providing input on land-use policy and regulations related to forestry
- Providing technical assistance to forest landowners and cooperatives
- Conducting forest stewardship classes and workshops
- Developing incentive programs
- Educating the general public about forestland issues
- Supporting the Rural Forest Commission

- Compiling and reporting data on forest cover change/loss
- Managing county-owned land
- Working with community groups to conserve forestland
- Providing input on acquisitions
- Providing urban forest technical assistance and grants

Louis Kahn commented that there is a need to evaluate the disincentives that are discouraging landowners from continuing to manage for forestry. Doug suggested the need to come up with a list of specific disincentives.

Fred commented that there is a lack of citizen groups focused on the rural landscape. He feels there is a need for such groups. Kathy suggested that the WFFA could fill that hole, but they do not have much of a constituency in King County.

Dennis Dart suggested that it is very important to continue educating the general public about forestry. He suggested that staff should attend events such as Issaquah Salmon Days to distribute information. Steve Ketz suggested that Weyerhaeuser has had a lot of success working with teachers. He also feels that there is a need to measure the effectiveness of outreach programs. If they can't be measured, don't waste your time.

Benj suggested that perhaps the Commission could make specific recommendations about monitoring at the next meeting.

King County Forestland Management

Doug introduced the topic by stating that the Commission is there to help and has the expertise to make recommendations on an appropriate organizational structure to manage forestlands and the skills needed to do so. Doug summarized the comments made at the April meeting: defend the land, use the knowledge of your neighbors, educate the users, get to know the land, and establish a management system wherein the managers have some ownership in the land. He emphasized the need to transition from a parks program to a natural land management program.

Kathy showed the County-owned natural lands on the map. They are divided into four categories; ecological, working resource, multi-use and recreation.

Bobbi Wallace suggested that Commissioners might want to attend the public meetings of the Metropolitan Parks Task Force.

Jerry Balcom commented that the development of an organizational structure will likely take six to eight months given the current budget deliberations. He summarized the budget issues that the County is facing. There will not be much money in the general

fund for land management in the future. He would like to know what the necessary land management functions are that the County should focus on. He commented that the natural lands are not entirely natural. There are trails, public use, and unauthorized activities on many of them. Furthermore, there are 81 sites, which makes for a lot of neighbors.

Doug asked who the RFC should be engaged with at the County throughout this process.

Bobbi commented that there is a need for the Commission to better understand the Parks program.

Bill Kombol suggested that the best approach would be to look for revenue generating opportunities rather than assuming that there will be costs. In addition to timber, there may be potential for oil and gas leases, cell towers, etc. Bill also suggested that the best people to monitor the land are the neighbors. The county should develop an informal, casual relationship with neighbors that have been around for a while. Bobbi commented that the Park system already has a Park ambassador system whereby citizens commit to spending 100 hours on the land.

Steve Ketz commented that even natural lands that are left on their own to mature will have costs for cleaning up trash, blocking access, etc. He also suggested that the County might want to consider evaluating the value of holding on to all of the properties it has acquired. Might it make sense to unload some that require a lot of maintenance and perhaps acquire others?

Bobbi gave a brief summary of the organization of the Parks division and where the resource coordinators fit in. She also presented several documents which she will leave with Benj, including Best Management Practices and work plans for the natural lands.

Dave Warren commented that County ownership is different than private ownership, and many citizens might not approve of gravel mining or oil drilling on County land. He agrees with the concept of having neighbors serve as ambassadors, but he feels that it is not cheap. Managing volunteers costs money.

Bobbi asked for input about having jail in-mates work on properties. Doug commented that part of the cost should come from the department of corrections. In most cases it is more expensive to use corrections crews than to contract out the work.

Doug emphasized the importance of understanding the real costs and benefits of restoration projects. Bobbi commented that the money for restoration projects does not come from the General Fund, but rather from the Surface Water Management capital budget. Bobbi is working to ensure that the maintenance of restoration projects, which

recent research suggests might take as long as eight years, does not become a burden on the general fund.

Bobbi commented that the County has invested a lot in training Park employees in how to work with the public without becoming formal law enforcement officers.

Jerry summarized by suggesting that the discussion continue over the next few months. Doug suggested that given the need to make choices about how money is spent, he feels that the Commission can provide some very valuable input. He also feels that the merger of DNR and Parks needs to be orchestrated so that there is one team focused on the management of natural lands.

Bobbi commented that she feels that the merger has been very smooth and that she feels good about the new structure.

Gordon commented that the process outlined in the documents distributed by Bobbi suggest that the department is on the right track toward developing good management strategies.

Doug asked Jerry to take the initiative to ask for the Commission's input as the process continues.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30.

Next meeting: June 12 at 10:00 at the Preston Community Center. The July meeting will either be canceled or be a field trip.